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ABSTRACT

This document presents a list of significant events in the modern history of higher education in the United States, focusing on facts that are relevant to the Greater Expectations initiative to improve higher education. The time sequence begins in 1945 with the "Redbook" produced by the Harvard Committee on the Objectives of a General Education, which offered a theory and prescription for teaching general education, and continues through the 1999 release of data by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement on undergraduate student movement among institutions. Interspersed among the highlighted events are statements about college enrollment in recent history, from the time when 18% of high school graduates attended college to 1990, when 75% of high school graduates enrolled in higher education within 2 years of graduation. (SLD)

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Undergraduate Education: A Chronicle

June 2000
AAC&U

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ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, JUNE 2000

Greater Expectations National Panel

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION: A CHRONICLE

Events/Facts Selected for Relevance to the Greater Expectations Initiative

- 18% of high school graduates attend college.
- Congress passes the G.I. Bill that provides financial assistance for returning servicemen to attend college. 2.25 million veterans enroll, starting the movement toward quasi-universality of higher education. (3)

1945 Harvard University Committee on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society produces the "Redbook." Offers a theory of and prescription for teaching general education. Specifies that general education is distinct from specialization and should embrace the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Recommends six year-long courses in general education for graduation. General education described as helping people think effectively, communicate thoughts, make relevant judgments, and discriminate among values. Recommendations adopted around the country but not at Harvard. (3)

1947 The President's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy issues a report that calls for the development of community colleges and a host of other programs supportive of making at least two years of higher education available to many more people. (3)

National Education Defense Act provides, among other things, for undergraduate student loans, thereby expanding access to higher education. (3)

College Board scores begin to decline nationally. (3)

College enrollments equal 40% of 18-21-year-old population. (3)

Higher Education Act of 1965 expands aid to public and private institutions as well as to individual students. (3)

College enrollments equal 48% of 18-21-year old population. (3)

1971 A task force of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (directed by Frank Newman) urges, among other things, diversification of college faculty, commitment to minority education, and equality for women. (3)

HE 3624

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching publishes *Missions of the College Curriculum* that declares general education " a disaster area." (2)

U.S. Commissioner of Education Ernest Boyer and his assistant call for a common core curriculum as a way to focus on critical issues central to all members of society. (2)

Harvard launches the Harvard Plan of General Education, focused on modes of knowing addressed through a loose system of distribution requirements, in response to the report of the Task Force on the Core Curriculum. (3)

[Note: These last three occurrences kicked of a "veritable movement to reform general education." (2)

1980s (early) The work of David Kolb and others encourages campuses to develop programs with components of experiential learning and collaborative learning. Recognition of and response to individual learning styles is encouraged.

- Secretary of Education William Bennett issues *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education*. Decries erosion of the humanities curriculum and lack of overall coherence of most humanities programs. Calls for a required common core in the humanities and Western civilization.(3)

1984 The National Institute of Education publishes *Involvement in Learning* which calls for action learning and for all students to have at least two years of general study in arts and sciences.

- The Association of American Colleges (AAC) publishes *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community*. Documents the decline and devaluation of the undergraduate degree. Calls for, among other things, a more coherent curriculum focused on ways of knowing and modes of judgment. Also calls for responsibility of the faculty as a whole for the curriculum as a whole.

1985 Campus Compact founded to promote community service, often through service learning course work.

- Alan Bloom writes *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. The book's attack on new scholarship engenders extensive debate about the role of higher education in a diverse democracy.

1980s (late) Virtually all colleges and universities have reviewed their general education programs, and large numbers have revised them. (2)

1990 Public two-year colleges enroll 45% of all first-time undergraduates and must accept any high school graduate who applies.

- 75% of high school graduates enroll in higher education within two years of graduation.
- Adults comprise 42.5% of all undergraduates.
- 1995 Nearly 1/4 of students entering four-year public colleges take remedial

courses.

- The Board of Trustees of CUNY votes to eliminate all remedial programs at its 4-year institutions. (3)

1997 The National Center for Education Statistics reports that between 1976 and 1997 minority enrollment in higher education increased from 16% to 27%.

- AAC&U projects have involved over 500 institutions in reforming general education. 92 campuses participated in projects to incorporate issues of diversity into the curriculum. Other projects have addressed language study, global learning, scientific literacy and re-framing majors.

1999 U.S. Department of Education OERI data presents a picture of undergraduate student movement among institutions. Predicted: 60% multi-institutional attendance rate by 2000, although the number of institutions attended has no effect on degree completion. Raises questions about the meaning of institutional graduation rates as measure of quality. (1)

- The commissions on institutions of higher education of all six regional accreditation associations revise standards to stress student learning and assessment.
- Greater Expectations National Panel, in a project sponsored by AAC&U, undertakes a national dialogue about the aims and purposes of a 21st century undergraduate education

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